

REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated November 1, 2005. Claims 1-9 were pending. By this Amendment, claim 4 has been canceled, new claim 10 has been added, claims 3 and 5-9 have been amended to place the claims in better form for examination, and claim has been amended by incorporating the features formerly recited in now-canceled claim 4. Accordingly, claims 1-3 and 5-10 are presented for reconsideration, with claim 1 being the sole pending claim in independent form.

The title was objected to as purportedly not descriptive.

By this Amendment, the title has been amended.

Withdrawal of the objection to the title is requested.

Claim 3 was objected to as having informalities. Claims 4-9 were objected to under 37 C.F.R. §1.75(c) as purportedly being in improper form. Claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as allegedly indefinite.

By this Amendment, claims 3-9 have been amended.

Withdrawal of the objection to the claims and the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as purportedly anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0145426 (Minas et al.). Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as purportedly obvious over Minas in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,436,607 to Chari et al.

Applicant has carefully considered the Examiner's comments and the cited art, and respectfully submits that independent claim 1 is patentable over the cited art, for at least the following reasons.

This application relates to a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) apparatus of vertical magnetic field type. Such an apparatus typically includes (i) a gantry which has a pair of magnets for forming a static magnetic field oppositely arranged in a vertical (up-down) direction with respect to a measurement space to which an object to be examined is inserted, (ii) columns installed over the upper and lower magnets and holding the upper magnet, (iii) a bed on which the object to be examined is placed and which is inserted into the measurement space between the magnets, and (iv) a bed base for supporting the top plate. This type of apparatus is often used when access to the object being examined is required, such as in interventional MR.

Applicant devised improvements to such an apparatus to make it easy for access to the object to be examined from various directions.

For example, independent claim 1 is directed to a magnetic resonance imaging apparatus wherein a cross sectional area of one column of the pair of columns is made smaller than that of the other, and the bed is disposed so that the top plate is inserted toward the center of the pair of magnets from the side of the column with small cross sectional area with respect to a line perpendicular to a line connecting the centers of the pair of columns and passing through the center of the pair of magnets.

Minas, as understood by Applicant, is directed to an open or split-type MRI apparatus which has two axially spaced magnet coil sections separated and supported by a compact support structure. The two magnet sections are axially connected and supported by two axially extending posts.

Applicant does not find disclosure or suggestion in Minas, however, of a magnetic resonance imaging apparatus wherein a cross sectional area of one column of the pair of columns is made smaller than that of the other, and the bed is disposed so that the top plate is inserted

toward the center of the pair of magnets from the side of the column with small cross sectional area with respect to a line perpendicular to a line connecting the centers of the pair of columns and passing through the center of the pair of magnets, as provided by claim 1 as amended.

Chari, as understood by Applicant, is directed to an open magnet having two magnet assemblies arranged in a spaced apart, parallel relationship to define a working space therebetween for magnetic resonance imaging. The magnet assemblies are attached to a C-shaped support frame which is rotatively mounted to a pedestal member. Chari was cited in the Office Action as purportedly proposing a support for an open MRI magnet which is curved toward the outside.

Applicant does not find disclosure or suggestion in the cited art, however, of a magnetic resonance imaging apparatus wherein a cross sectional area of one column of the pair of columns is made smaller than that of the other, and the bed is disposed so that the top plate is inserted toward the center of the pair of magnets from the side of the column with small cross sectional area with respect to a line perpendicular to a line connecting the centers of the pair of columns and passing through the center of the pair of magnets, as provided by claim 1 as amended.

Accordingly, for at least the above-stated reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1, and the claims depending therefrom, are patentable over the cited art.

In view of the amendments to the claims and remarks hereinabove, Applicant submits that the application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant earnestly solicits the allowance of the application.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees that may be required in connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our

Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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